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NOTES

ON SOME OF

THE PRINCIPAL PICTURES

EXHIBITED IN THE ROOMS OF THE

ROYAL ACADEMY:

1875.

BY

JOHN RUSKIN,

SLADE PROFESSOR OF FINE ART, AND HON. STUDENT OF CHRISTCHURCH, OXFORD

THIRD EDITION.

GEORGE ALLEN, SUNNYSIDE, ORPINGTON, KENT,

AND

ELLIS AND WHITE, NEW BOND STREET.

1875.

PRICE ONE SHILLING.

Watson and Hazell, Printers, London and Aylesbury.

N505
R8
1875

PREFACE.

It is now just twenty years since I wrote the first number of these notes ; and fifteen, since they were discontinued. I have no intention of renewing the series, unless occasionally, should accident detain me in London during the spring. But this year, for many reasons, it seemed to me imperatively proper to say as much as is here said.

And that the temper of the saying may not be so far as I can prevent it, be mistaken, I will venture to ask my reader to hear, and trust that he will believe, thus much concerning myself. Among various minor, but collectively sufficient reasons for the cessation of these notes, one of the chief was the exclamation of a young artist moving in good society,—authentically, I doubt not, reported to me,—“D—— the fellow,—why doesn’t he back his friends?” The general want in the English mind of any abstract conception

of justice, and the substitution for it of the idea of fidelity to a party, as the first virtue of public action, had never struck me so vividly before; and thenceforward it seemed to me useless, so far as artists were concerned, to continue criticism which they would esteem dishonourable, unless it was false.

But Fortune has so sternly reversed her wheel during these recent years, that I am more likely now to be accused of malice than of equity; and I am therefore at the pains to beg the honest reader to believe, that, having perhaps as much pleasure as other people, both in backing my friends, and fronting my enemies, I have never used, and shall never use, my power of criticism to such end; but that I write now, and have always written, so far as I am able, what may show that there is a fixed criterion of separation between right art and wrong; that no opinion, no time, and no circumstances can ever in one jot change this relation of their Good and Evil; and that it would be pleasant for the British public to recognize the one, and wise in them to eschew the other.

HERNE HILL,
May 23rd, 1875.

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BEFORE looking at any single picture, let us understand the scope and character of the Exhibition as a whole. The Royal Academy of England, in its annual publication, is now nothing more than a large coloured 'Illustrated Times' folded in saloons:—the splendidest May Number of the Graphic, shall we call it? That is to say, it is a certain quantity of pleasant, but imperfect, "illustration" of passing events, mixed with as much gossip of the past, and tattle of the future, as may be probably agreeable to a populace supremely ignorant of the one, and reckless of the other.

Supremely ignorant, I say;—ignorant, that is, on the lofty ground of their supremacy in useless knowledge.

For instance; the actual facts which Shakespeare knew, about Rome, were, in number and accuracy, compared to those which M. Alma-Tadema knows, as the pictures of a child's first story-book, compared to Smith's Dictionary of Antiquities.

But when Shakespeare wrote,

“The noble sister of Publicola,
The Moon of Rome; chaste as the icicle
That’s curdled by the frost from purest snow,
And hangs on Dian’s temple,”

he knew Rome herself, to the heart; and M. Tadema, after reading his Smith’s Dictionary through from A to Z, knows nothing of her but her shadow; and that, cast at sunset.

Yet observe, in saying that Academy work is now nothing more, virtually, than cheap coloured woodcut, I do not mean to depreciate the talent employed in it. Our public press is supported by an ingenuity and skill in rapid art, unrivalled at any period of history; nor have I ever been so humbled, or astonished, by the mightiest work of Tintoret, Turner, or Velasquez, as I was one afternoon last year, in watching, in the Dudley gallery, two ordinary workmen for a daily newspaper, finishing their drawings on the blocks by gaslight, against time.

Nay,—not in skill only, but in pretty sentiment, our press illustration, in its higher ranks, far surpasses—or indeed, in that department finds no rivalship in—the schools of classical art; and it happens curiously that the only drawing of which the memory remains with me as a possession, out of the old water-colour exhibition of this year,—Mrs. Allingham’s “Young Customers,”—should be, not only by an accomplished designer of woodcut, but itself the illustration of

a popular story." The drawing, with whatever temporary purpose executed, is for ever lovely; a thing which I believe Gainsborough would have given one of his own pictures for,—old-fashioned as red-tipped daisies are,—and more precious than rubies.

And I am conscious of, and deeply regret, the inevitable warp which my own lately exclusive training under the elder schools gives to my estimate of this current art of the day; and submissively bear the blame due to my sullen refusal of what good is offered me in the railroad station, because I cannot find in it what I found in the Ducal Palace. And I may be permitted to say this much, in the outset, in apology for myself, that I determined on writing this number of Academy notes, simply because I was so much delighted with Mr. Leslie's School,—Mr. Leighton's little Fatima, Mr. Hook's Hearts of Oak, and Mr. Couldery's kittens,—that I thought I should be able to write an entirely good-humoured, and therefore, in all likelihood, practically useful, sketch of the socially pleasant qualities of modern English painting, which were not enough acknowledged in my former essays.

As I set myself to the work, and examined more important pictures, my humour changed, though much against my will. Not more reluctantly the son of Beor found his utterances become benedictory, than I mine—the reverse. But the need of speaking, if not the service, (for too often we can help least where need is most), is assuredly greater

than if I could have spoken smooth things without ruffling anywhere the calm of praise.

Popular or classic,—temporary, or eternal, all good art is more or less didactic. My artist-adversaries rage at me for saying so; but the gayest of them cannot help being momentarily grave; nor the emptiest-headed, occasionally instructive: and whatever work any of them do, that is indeed honourable to themselves, is also intellectually helpful, no less than entertaining, to others. And it will be the surest way of estimating the intrinsic value of the art of this year, if we proceed to examine it in the several provinces which its didactic functions occupy; and collect the sum of its teaching on the subjects,—which will, I think, sufficiently embrace its efforts in every kind,—of Theology, History, Biography, Natural History, Landscape, and as the end of all, Policy.

THEOLOGY.

584. Dedicated to all the Churches. (G. F. Watts, R.A.)

Here, at least, is one picture meant to teach; nor failing of its purpose, if we read it rightly. Very beautiful, it might have been; and is, in no mean measure: but as years pass by, the artist concedes to himself, more and more, the privilege which none but the feeble should seek, of sub-

stituting the sublimity of mystery for that of absolute majesty of form. The relation between this grey and soft cloud of visionary power, and the perfectly substantial, bright, and near presence of the saints, angels, or Deities of early Christian art, involves questions of too subtle interest to be followed here ; but in the essential force of it, belongs to the inevitable expression, in each period, of the character of its own faith. The Christ of the 13th century was vividly present to its thoughts, and dominant over its acts, as a God manifest in the flesh, well pleased in the people to whom He came ; while ours is either forgotten ; or seen, by those who yet trust in Him, only as a mourning and departing Ghost.

129. Ezekiel's Vision. (P. F. Poole, R.A.)

Though this design cannot for a moment be compared with the one just noticed, in depth of feeling, there is yet, as there has been always in Mr. Poole's work, some acknowledgment of a supernatural influence in physical phenomena, which gives a nobler character to his storm-painting than can belong to any merely literal study of the elements. But the piece is chiefly interesting for its parallelism with that 'dedicated to all the churches,' in effacing the fearless realities of the elder creed among the confused speculations of our modern one. The beasts in Raphael's vision of Ezekiel are as solid as the cattle in Smithfield ; while here, if traceable at all in the drift of the storm-cloud, (which, it is implied,

was all that the prophet really saw), their animal character can only be accepted in polite compliance with the prophetic impression, as the weasel by Polonius. And my most Polonian courtesy fails in deciphering the second of the four—not-living,—creatures.

218. Rachel and her Flock. (F. Goodall, R.A.)

This is one of the pictures which, with such others as Holman Hunt's "Scapegoat," Millais' "Dove Returning to the Ark," etc., the public owe primarily to the leading genius of Dante Rossetti, the founder, and for some years the vital force of the pre-Raphaelite school. He was the first assertor in painting, as I believe I was myself in art-literature, (Goldsmith and Molière having given the first general statements of it) of the great distinctive principle of that school, that things should be painted as they probably did look and happen, and not as, by rules of art developed under Raphael, Correggio, and Michael Angelo, they might be supposed gracefully, deliciously, or sublimely to have happened.

The adoption of this principle by good and great men, produces the grandest art possible in the world; the adoption of it by vile and foolish men,—very vile and foolish art; yet not so entirely nugatory as imitations of Raphael or Correggio would be by persons of the same calibre: an intermediate and large class of pictures have been produced by painters of average powers; mostly of considerable value, but which fall again into two

classes, according to the belief of the artists in the truth, and understanding of the dignity of the subjects they endeavour to illustrate, or their opposite degree of incredulity, and materialistic vulgarity of interpretation.

The picture before us belongs to the higher class, but is not a fine example of it. We cannot tell from it whether Mr. Goodall believes Rachel to have wept over Ramah from her throne in heaven; but at least we gather from it some suggestion of what she must have looked like, when she was no more than a Syrian shepherdess.

That she was a very beautiful shepherdess, so that her lover thought years of waiting but as days, for the love he bore to her, Mr. Goodall has scarcely succeeded in representing. And on the whole he would have measured his powers more reasonably in contenting himself with painting a Yorkshire shepherdess instead of a Syrian one.* Like everybody except myself—he has been in the East. If that is the appearance of the new moon in the East, I am well enough content to guide, and gild, the lunacies of my declining years by the light of the old western one.

518. Julian the Apostate, presiding, etc. (E. Armytage, R.A.)

This, I presume, is a modern enlightened im-

* Compare however at once 582, which is, on the whole, the most honourably complete and scholastic life-size figure in the rooms, with well cast, and unaffectedly well painted, drapery.

provement on the Disputa del Sacramento. The English Church is to be congratulated on the education she gives her artists. Fumbling with sham Gothic, penny tracts, and twopenny Scripture prints, among the embers of reverence and sacred life that yet linger on from the soul of ancient days, she holds her own, in outward appearance at least, among our simple country villages; and, in our more ignorant manufacturing centres, contentedly enamels the service of Mammon with the praise of God. But in the capital of England—here, on her Vatican hill above St. Peter's church, and beside St. Paul's—*this* is the testimony she wins from art, as compared with the councils of Fathers, and concourses of Saints which poor dark-minded Italy once loved to paint. Mr. Armytage, however, has not completed his satire with subtlety; he knows the higher virtue of sectarians as little as Gibbon knew those of Julian,* whose sincere apostacy was not the act of a soul which could 'enjoy the agreeable spectacle' of vile dispute among any men;—least of all, among those whom he had once believed messengers of Christ.

1293—1295. Terra-cottas, representing, etc. (S. Tinworth.)

Full of fire and zealous faculty, breaking its way through all conventionalism to such truth as it can conceive; able also to conceive far more than can be rightly expressed on this scale,

* See note on page 61.

And, after all the labours of past art on the Life of Christ, here is an English workman fastening, with more decision than I recollect in any of them, on the gist of the sin of the Jews, and their rulers, in the choice of Barabbas, and making the physical fact of contrast between the man released, and the man condemned, clearly visible. We must receive it, I suppose, as a flash of really prophetic intelligence on the question of Universal Suffrage.

These bas-reliefs are the most earnest work in the Academy, next to Mr. Boehm's study of Carlyle. But how it happens that after millions of money have been spent in the machinery of art education at Kensington, an ornamental designer of so high faculty as this one, should never in his life have found a human being able to explain to him the first principles of relief, or show him the difference between decorative foliage-sculpture, and Norman hatchet-work,—I must leave the Kensington authorities to explain,—for it passes all my capacities of conjecture, and all my hitherto experience of the costly and colossal public institution of—Nothing,—out of which, to wise men, as here, can come nothing; but to fools everywhere, —worse than nothing. Kensington has flattened its thousands of weak students into machine pattern-papers:—here, it had a true man to deal with; and, for all he has learned of his business, he might as well have lived in South Australia.

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And, after all the labours of past art on the Life of Christ, here is an English workman fastening, with more decision than I recollect in any of them, on the gist of the sin of the Jews, and their rulers, in the choice of Barabbas, and making the physical fact of contrast between the man released, and the man condemned, clearly visible. We must receive it, I suppose, as a flash of really prophetic intelligence on the question of Universal Suffrage.

These bas-reliefs are the most earnest work in the Academy, next to Mr. Boehm's study of Carlyle. But how it happens that after millions of money have been spent in the machinery of art education at Kensington, an ornamental designer of so high faculty as this one, should never in his life have found a human being able to explain to him the first principles of relief, or show him the difference between decorative foliage-sculpture, and Norman hatchet-work,—I must leave the Kensington authorities to explain,—for it passes all my capacities of conjecture, and all my hitherto experience of the costly and colossal public institution of—Nothing,—out of which, to wise men, as here, can come nothing; but to fools everywhere, —worse than nothing. Kensington has flattened its thousands of weak students into machine pattern-papers:—here, it had a true man to deal with; and, for all he has learned of his business, he might as well have lived in South Australia.

provement on the Disputa del Sacramento. The English Church is to be congratulated on the education she gives her artists. Fumbling with sham Gothic, penny tracts, and twopenny Scripture prints, among the embers of reverence and sacred life that yet linger on from the soul of ancient days, she holds her own, in outward appearance at least, among our simple country villages; and, in our more ignorant manufacturing centres, contentedly enamels the service of Mammon with the praise of God. But in the capital of England—here, on her Vatican hill above St. Peter's church, and beside St. Paul's—*this* is the testimony she wins from art, as compared with the councils of Fathers, and concourses of Saints which poor dark-minded Italy once loved to paint. Mr. Armytage, however, has not completed his satire with subtlety; he knows the higher virtue of sectarians as little as Gibbon knew those of Julian,* whose sincere apostacy was not the act of a soul which could 'enjoy the agreeable spectacle' of vile dispute among any men;—least of all, among those whom he had once believed messengers of Christ.

1293—1295. Terra-cottas, representing, etc. (S. Tinworth.)

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HISTORY.

26. The Sculpture Gallery. (L. Alma-Tadema.)

This, I suppose, we must assume to be the principal historical piece of the year; a work showing artistic skill and classic learning, both in high degree. But both parallel in their method of selection. The artistic skill has succeeded with all its objects in the degree of their unimportance. The piece of silver plate is painted best; the griffin bas-relief it stands on, second best; the statue of the empress worse than the griffins, and the living personages, worse than the statue. I do not know what feathers the fan with the frightful mask in the handle, held by the nearest lady, is supposed to be made of; to a simple spectator they look like peacock's, without the eyes. And, indeed, the feathers, under which the motto 'I serve' of French art seems to be written in these days, are, I think, very literally, all feather and no eyes,—the Raven's feather to wit, of Sycorax. The selection of the subject is similarly—one might say, filamentous,—of the extremity, instead of the centre. The old French Republicans, reading of Rome, chose such events to illustrate her history, as the battle of Romulus with the Sabines, the vow of the Horatii, or the self-martyrdom of Lucretia. The modern Republican sees in the Rome he studies so profoundly, only a central establishment

for the manufacture and sale of imitation-Greek articles of virtù.

The execution is dextrous, but more with mechanical steadiness of practice than innate fineness of nerve. It is impossible, however, to say how much the personal nervous faculty of an artist of this calibre is paralysed by his education in schools which I could not characterize in my Oxford inaugural lectures otherwise than as the 'schools of clay,' in which he is never shown what Venetians or Florentines meant by 'painting,' and allowed to draw his flesh steadily and systematically with shadows of charcoal, and lights of cream-soap, without ever considering whether there would be any reflections in the one, or any flush of life in the other. The head on the extreme left is exceptionally good; but who ever saw a woman's neck and hand blue-black under reflection from white drapery, as they are in the nearer figure? It is well worth while to go straight from this picture to the two small studies by Mr. Albert Moore, 356 and 357,—which are consummately artistic and scientific work: examine them closely, and with patience; the sofa and basket especially, in 357, with a lens of moderate power; and, by way of a lesson in composition, hide in this picture the little honeysuckle ornament above the head, and the riband hanging over the basket, and see what becomes of everything! Or try the effect of concealing the yellow flower in the hair, in the 'flower walk.' And for comparison with the elementary method

of M. Tadema, look at the blue reflection on the chin in this figure; at the reflection of the warm brick wall on its right arm; and at the general modes of unaffected relief by which the extended left arm in 'Pansies' detaches itself from the background. And you ought afterwards, if you have eye for colour, never more to mistake a tinted drawing for a painting.

233. The Festival. (E. J. Poynter, A.)

I wonder how long Mr. Poynter thinks a young lady could stand barefoot on a round-runged ladder; or that a sensible Greek girl would take her sandals off to try, on an occasion when she had festive arrangements to make with care. The ladders themselves, here and in No. 236 (The Golden Age), appear to me not so classical, or so rude, in type, as might have been expected; but to savour somewhat of expeditious gas-lighting. Of course Mr. Poynter's object in No. 236 is to show us, like Michael Angelo, the adaptability of limbs to awkward positions. But he can only, by this anatomical science, interest his surgical spectators; while the Golden Age, in this pinchbeck one, interests nobody. Not even the painter,—for had he looked at the best authorities for account of it, he would have found that its people lived chiefly on corn and strawberries, both growing wild; and doubtless the loaded fruit-branches drooped to their reach. Both these pictures are merely studies of decorative composition, and have far too much pains

taken with them for their purpose. Decorative work, however complete, should be easy.

401. Ready! (P. Cockerell.)

I suppose this is meant for portrait, not history. At all events, the painter has been misled in his endeavour, if he made any, to render Swiss character, by Schiller's absurd lines. Schiller, of all men high in poetic fame whose works are in any wise known to me, has the feeblest hold of facts, and the dullest imagination. "Still as a lamb!" Sucking, I suppose? They are so very quiet in that special occupation; and never think of such a thing as jumping, when they have had enough, of course? And I should like to hear a Swiss (or English) boy, with any stuff in him, liken himself to a lamb! If there were any real event from which the legend sprung, the boy's saying would have been not in the smallest degree pathetic: "Never fear *me*, father; I'll stand like grandmother's donkey when she wants him to go,"—or something to such effect.

482. The Babylonian Marriage Market. (E. Long.)

A painting of great merit, and well deserving purchase by the Anthropological Society. For the varieties of character in the heads are rendered with extreme subtlety, while, as a mere piece of painting, the work is remarkable, in the modern school, for its absence of affectation; there is no insolently indulged indolence, nor vulgarly

asserted dexterity,—the painting is good throughout, and unobtrusively powerful.

It becomes a question of extreme interest with me, as I examine this remarkable picture, how far the intensely subtle observation of physical character and expression which rendered the painting of it possible, necessitates the isolation of the artist's thoughts from subjects of intellectual interest, or moral beauty. Certainly, the best expressional works of the higher schools present nothing analogous to the anatomical precision with which the painter has here graduated the feature and expression of the twelve waiting girls, from great physical beauty to absolute ugliness; and from the serene insolence and power of accomplished fleshly womanhood, to the restless audacity, and crushed resignation, of its despised states of personal inferiority, unconsoled by moral strength, or family affection. As a piece of anthropology, it is the natural and very wonderful product of a century occupied in carnal and mechanical science. In the total paralysis of conception—without attempt to disguise the palsy—as to the existence of any higher element in a woman's mind than vanity and spite, or in a man's than avarice and animal passion, it is also a specific piece of the natural history of our own century; but only a partial one, either of it, or of the Assyrian, who was once as "the cedars in the garden of God."

The painter has in the first instance misread his story, or been misled by his translation.

This custom, called wise by Herodotus, is so called only as practised in country districts with respect to the fortuneless girls of the lower labouring population; daughters of an Assyrian noble, however plain-featured, would certainly not be exposed in the market to receive dowry from the dispute for their fairer sisters.* But there is matter of deeper interest in the custom, as it is compared to our modern life. However little the English educated classes now read their Bibles, they cannot but, in the present state of literary science, be aware that there is a book, once asserted to have been written by St. John, in which a spiritual Babylon is described as the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth, and her ruin represented as lamentable, especially to the *merchants*, who trafficked with her in many beautiful and desirable articles, but above all in "souls of men."

Also, the educated reader cannot but be aware that the animosity of Christian sects—which we have seen the subject of another important national-historical picture in this Academy—has for the last three hundred years wasted much of their energy in endeavours to find Scriptural reason for calling each other Babylonians, and whatever else that term may be understood to imply.

* The passage in Strabo which gives some countenance to the idea of universality in the practice, gives a somewhat different colour to it by the statement that over each of the three great Assyrian provinces a "temperately wise" person was set to conduct the ordinances of marriage.

There is, however, no authority to be found in honestly read Scripture for these well-meaning, but ignorant, incivilities. Read in their entirety, the books of the Bible represent to us a literal and material deliverance of a visibly separated people, from a literal bondage; their establishment in a literally fruitful and peaceful land, and their being led away out of that land, in consequence of their refusal to obey the laws of its Lord, into a literal captivity in a small, material, Babylon. The same Scriptures represent to us a spiritual deliverance of an invisibly separated people, from spiritual bondage; their establishment in the spiritual land of Christian joy and peace; and their being led away out of this land into a spiritual captivity in a great spiritual Babylon, the mother of abominations, and in all active transactions especially delightful to 'merchants'—persons engaged, that is to say, in obtaining profits by exchange instead of labour.

And whatever was literally done, whether apparently wise or not, in the minor fleshly Babylon, will, therefore, be found spiritually fulfilled in the major ghostly one,—and, for instance, as the most beautiful and marvellous maidens were announced for literal sale by auction in Assyria, are not also the souls of our most beautiful and marvellous maidens announced annually for sale by auction in Paris and London, in a spiritual manner, for the spiritual advantages of position in society?

BIOGRAPHY.

UNDER this head I include Drama, Domestic Incident, and Portrait: this last being, if good, the sum of what drama and domestic chances have been wrought by, and befallen to, the person portrayed.

Not to begin with too high matters, and collapse subsequently, suppose we first contemplate the pretty little scene,

408. Domestic Troubles. (J. Burr.)

The boy peeping in fearfully at the door, has evidently, under the inspiration of modern scientific zeal, dissected the bellows,—and whether they will ever help the pot to boil again is doubtful to grandpapa. The figure of the younger child, mute with awe, and anxiety, yet not wholly guiltless of his naughty brother's curiosity, is very delightful. Avenging Fate, at the chimneypiece, is too severe.

I have marked, close by it, two other pictures, 403, 405, which interested me for reasons scarcely worth printing. The cloister of Assisi has been carefully and literally studied, in all but what is singular or beautiful in it; namely, the flattened dome over its cistern, and the central mossy well above. But there is more conscientious treatment of the rest of the building, and greater quietness of natural light than in most picture backgrounds

of these days. Ponte della Paglia, 405, may be useful to travellers in at least clearly, if not quite accurately, showing the decorative use of the angle sculpture of the drunkenness of Noah on the Ducal Palace; and the Bridge of Sighs is better painted than usual.

242. A Merrie Jest. (H. S. Marks, A.)

Very characteristic of the painter's special gift. The difficulty of so subtle a rendering as this of the half-checked, yet extreme mirth of persons naturally humorous, can only be judged of by considering how often aspects of laughter are attempted in pictures, and how rarely we feel ourselves inclined to join in the merriment. The piece of accessory landscape is very unaffected and good, and the painting, throughout, here, as well as in the equally humorous, and useless, picture of bygone days, 166, of good standard modern quality.

107. The Barber's Prodigy. (J. B. Burgess.)

A close and careful study of modern domestic drama, deserving notice, however, chiefly for its unaffected manner of work, and moderately pleasant incident, as opposed to over-laboured pictures of what is merely ugly, or meanly faultful, 141, 241, —wastes of attention, skill, and time. "Too Good to be True," 153, another clever bit of minor drama, is yet scarcely good enough to be paused at; "Private and Confidential," 375, deserves a

few moments more. 879 (A. Lüben) is much surer and finer in touch than anything English that I can find in this sort. The Düsseldorf Germans, and the Neuchatel Swiss have been doing splendid domestic work lately ; but, I suppose, are too proud to exhibit here.

75. Sophia Western. (W. P. Frith, R.A.)

The painter seems not to have understood, nor are the public likely to understand, that Fielding means, in the passage quoted, to say that Miss Western's hands were white, soft, translucent, and at the moment, snow-cold. In the picture they cannot be shown to be cold,—are certainly not white ; do not look soft ; and scarcely show the light of the fire on them, much less through them. But what is the use of painting from Fielding at all ? Of all our classic authors, it is he who demands the reader's attention most strictly ; and what modern reader ever attends to anything ?

88. Loot : 1797. (A. C. Gow.)

An entirely fine picture of its class, representing an ordinary fact of war as it must occur, without any forced sentiment or vulgar accent. Highly skilful throughout, keenly seen, well painted, and deserving a better place than the slow cart-horses and solid waterfalls on the line have left for it.

89. War Time. (B. Rivière.)

Compare 626, at once ; the first is a true piece

of feeling—almost Wordsworthian; the second, disgraceful to it; both in the low pitch of its vulgar horror, and in its loss of power, by retreat to picturesque tradition, instead of dealing, like the other, with the facts of our own day.

If Mr. Rivière really feels as I think he feels; and means to do good, he must not hope to do anything with people who would endure the sight of a subject such as this. He may judge what they are worth by a sentence I heard as I stood before it. “Last of the garrison—ha! they’re all finished off, you see,—isn’t that well done?” At all events, if he means to touch them, he must paint the cooking of a French pet-poodle; not the stabbing of a bloodhound.

214. The Crown of Love. (J. E. Millais.)

Much of the painter’s old power remains in this sketch; (it cannot be called a painting;) and it is of course the leading one of the year in dramatic sentiment. This, then, it appears, is the best that English art can at the moment, say, in praise of the virtue, and promise of the reward, of Love; this, the subject of sentimental contemplation likely to be most pleasing to the present British public;—torture, namely, carried to crisis of death, in the soul of one creature, and flesh of another. The British public are welcome to their feast; but, as purchasers, they ought to be warned that, compared with the earlier dual pictures of the school, (Huguenot, Claudio and Isabella, April love, and the like,) this composition balances its

excess of sentiment by defect of industry; and that it is not a precedent advantageous to them, in the arrangement of pictures of lovers, that one should have a body without a face, and the other a face without a body.

47. Hearts of Oak. (J. C. Hook, R.A.)

Beautiful, but incomplete; the painter wants more heart of oak himself. If he had let all his other canvasses alone, and finished this, the year's work would have been a treasure for all the centuries; while now, it is only "the Hook of the season."

It looks right and harmonious in its subdued sunshine. But it isn't. Why should mussel shells cast a shadow; but boats and hats none? Why should toy-carts and small stones have light and dark sides; and tall rocks none? I fancy all the pictures this year must have been painted in the sunless east wind; and only a bit of sunshine put in here and there out of the painter's head, where he thought it would do nobody any harm.

112. A November Morning, etc. (H. T. Wells, R.A.)

Fishermen's hearts being of oak, what are huntsmen's hearts made of?

They will have to ascertain, and prove, soon; there being question now-a-days among the lower orders, whether they have got any, to speak of.

A pleasant aristocratic picture—creditable to Mr. Wells, and the nobility. Not a Vandyck, neither.

430. Sunday Afternoon. (R. Collinson.)

This picture, though of no eminent power in any respect, is extremely delightful to myself; and ought, I think, to be so to most unsophisticated persons, who care for English rural life; representing, as it does, a pleasant and virtuous phase of such life, whether on Sunday or Saturday afternoon.

Why, by the way, *must* we accept it for Sunday? Have our nice old women no rest on any other day? Do they never put on a clean muslin kerchief on any other day? Do they never read their Bible (of course, it would be improper to suppose any other book readable by them) on any other day? Whatever day it be—here, at all events, are peace, light, cleanliness, and content.

Luxury even, of a kind; the air coming in at that door must be delicious; and the leaves, outside of it, look like a bit of the kitchen-garden side of Paradise. They please me all the better, because, since scientific people were good enough to tell us that leaves were made green by 'green-leaf,' I haven't seen a leaf painted green, by anybody. But this peep through the door is like old times, when we were neither plagued with soot, nor science.

Note, for a little piece of technical study in composition, that the painter would not have been

able to venture on so pure colour outside of the door, had he not painted the door green as well, only of a modified tint, and so led the subdued colour forward into the red interior, taken up again by the shadows of the plants in the window. The management of the luminous shadow throughout is singularly skilful—all the more so because it attracts so little attention. *This* is true chiaroscuro; not spread treacle or splashed mud, speckled with white spots,—as a Rembrandt amateur thinks.

Mr. Pettie, for instance, a man of real feeling and great dramatic power, is ruining himself by these shallow notions of chiaroscuro. If he had not been mimicking Rembrandt, as well as the “costume of the sixteenth century,” in 318, he never would have thought of representing Scott’s entirely heroic and tender-hearted Harry of Perth (223), merely by the muscular back and legs of him, (the legs, by the way, were slightly bandy—if one holds to accuracy in anatomical respects); nor vulgarized the real pathos and most subtle expression of his Jacobites, (1217) by the slovenly dark background, corresponding, virtually, to the slouched hat of a theatrical conspirator. I have been examining the painting of the chief Jacobite’s face very closely. It is nearly as good as a piece of old William Hunt; but Hunt never loaded his paint, except in sticks, and moss, and such like. Now there’s a wrinkle quite essential to the expression, under the Jacobite’s eye, got by a projecting ridge of

paint, instead of a proper dark line. Rembrandt's bad bricklayer's work, with all the mortar sticking out at the edges, may be pardonable in a Dutchman sure of his colours; but it is always licentious; and in these days, when the first object of manufacture is to produce articles that won't last, if the mortar cracks, where are we?

To return to the question of chiaroscuro. The present Academicians—most of whom I have had anxious talk of, with their fathers or friends, when they were promising boys—have since been, with the best part of their minds, amusing themselves in London drawing-rooms, or Eastern deserts, instead of learning their business; with the necessary result that they have, as a body, qualified themselves rather to be Masters of Ceremonies than of Studies; and guides rather of Caravans than Schools; and have not got an inkling of any principle of their art to bless themselves—or other people, with. So that they have not only filled their large railroad station and stalls, (attached refreshment room completing the nature of the thing) with a mass of heterogeneous pictures, of which at least two-thirds are beneath the level of acceptance in any well established dealer's shop; * but they have encouraged, by favour of position, quite the worst abuses of the cheap art of the day; of which these tricks

* I permit myself to name, for instance, not as worse than others, but as peculiarly disagreeable to myself, because I love monks, herons, and sea,—450, 291, and 837.

of rubbing half the canvas over with black or brown, that the rest may come out handsomer, or that the spectator may be properly, but at the same time economically, prepared for its melancholy or sublime tenour, are among the least creditable either to our English wits or honesty. The portrait, No. 437, for instance, is a very respectable piece of painting, and would have taken its place well in the year's show of work, if the inkstand had not been as evanescent as the vision of Ezekiel, and the library shelves so lost in the gloom of art, as to suggest symbolically, what our bishops at home seem so much afraid of,—indistinctness in colonial divinity. And the two highly moral pictures, 101 and 335, which are meant to enforce on the public mind the touching theories that, for the labouring poor, grass is not green, nor geese white; and that on the pastoral poor, the snow falls dirty, might have delivered their solemn message just as convincingly from a more elevated stage of the wall-pulpit, without leaving on the minds of any profane spectator like myself, the impression of their having been executed by a converted crossing-sweeper, with his broom, after it was worn stumpy.

If the reader is interested in the abstract qualities of art, he will find it useful at once to compare with these more or less feeble or parsimonious performances, two pictures—which, if not high in attainment, are at least, the one strong, and the other generous. 184. "Peasantry

of Esthonia going to Market," (G. Bochman) is masterly work, by a man practised in his business ; but who has been taught it in a bad school. It is a true artistic abstraction of grey and angular natural facts ; it indeed omits too much, — for even in Esthonia there must be grass somewhere, or what could the horses eat? — and it omits the best things and keeps the worst ; but it is done with method, skill, and a conscientious notion that to be grey and angular is to be right. And it deserves a place in an Academy exhibition.

On the other hand, 263. "Getting Better," (C. Calthrop) is an intensely laborious, honest, and intentionally difficult study of chiaroscuro in two lights, on varied colour ; and in all other respects it is well meant, and generously, according to the painter's power, completed. I won't say more of it, because at the height it hangs I can see no more ; nor must the reader suppose that what I *have* said implies anything beyond what is stated. All that I certify is, that as a study of chiaroscuro it deserves close attention, much praise, and a better place than it at present occupies.

366. The Mayor of Newcastle. (W. W. Oules.)

An agreeable and vigorous portrait, highly creditable to the painter, and honourable to its subject and its possessors. Mr. Oules has adopted from Mr. Millais what was deserving of imitation ; and used the skill he has learned to

better ends. All his portraits here are vigorous and interesting.

221. John Stuart Blackie. (J. Archer.)

An entirely well-meant, and I should conjecture successful, portrait of a man much deserving portraiture. The background has true meaning, and is satisfactorily complete; very notable, in that character, among the portrait backgrounds of the year. The whole is right and good.

718. The Countess of Pembroke. (E. Clifford.)

Mr. Clifford evidently means well, and is studying in the elder schools; and painting persons who will permit him to do his best in his own way.

There is much of interesting in his work, but he has yet to pass through the Valley of Humiliation before he can reach the Celestial Mountains. He must become perfectly simple, before he can be sublime; above all, he must not hope to be great by effort. This portrait is over-laboured; and, towards the finishing, he has not well seen what he was doing, and has not rightly balanced his front light against that of the sky. But his drawings always deserve careful notice.

317. Miss M. Stuart Wortley. (A. Stuart Wortley.)

The rightest and most dignified female portrait here,—as Lady Coleridge's drawing of Mr. Newman, 1069, is the most subtle among those of

the members of learned professions ; (though Mr. Laurence's two beautiful drawings, 1054, 1062, only fall short of it by exhibiting too frankly the practised skill of their execution). 1052 is also excellent ; and, on the whole,—thinking over these, and other more irregular and skirmishing, but always well-meant, volunteer work, sprinkled about the rooms,—I think the amateurs had better have an Academy of their own next year, in which indulgently, when they had room to spare, they might admit the promising effort of an artist.

I have scarcely been able to glance round at the portrait sculpture ;—and am always iniquitously influenced, in judging of marble, by my humour for praise or dispraise of the model, rather than artist. Guarding myself, as well as I may, from such faultful bias, I yet venture to name 1342 as an exemplary piece of chiselling ; carefully and tenderly composed in every touch. If the hair on the forehead were completely finished, this would be a nearly perfect bust. I cannot understand why the sculptor should have completed the little tress that falls on the cheek so carefully ; and yet left so many unmodified contours in the more important masses.

1301. Thomas Carlyle. (J. E. Boehm.)

For this noble piece of portraiture I cannot trust myself to express my personal gratitude ; nor does either the time I can give to these notes, or their limited intention, permit me—if even otherwise I

could think it permissible—to speak at all of the high and harmonious measure in which it seems to me to express the mind and features of my dear Master.

This only it is within the compass of my present purpose to affirm,—that here is a piece of vital and essential sculpture; the result of sincere skill spent carefully on an object worthy its care: motive and method alike right; no pains spared; and none wasted. And any spectator of sensitiveness will find that, broadly speaking, all the sculpture round seems dead and heavy in comparison, after he has looked long at this.

There must always be, indeed, some difference in the immediate effect on our minds between the picturesque treatment proper in portrait sculpture, and that belonging, by its grace of reserve, to classical design. But it is generally a note of weakness in an Englishman when he thinks he can conceive like a Greek: so that the plurality of modern Hellenic Academy sculpture consists merely of imperfect anatomical models peeped at through bath-towels; and is in the essence of it quite as dull as it appears to be. Let us go back to less dignified work.

196. School Revisited. (G. D. Leslie, A.)

I came upon this picture early, in my first walk through the rooms, and was so delighted with it that it made me like everything else I saw, that morning; it is altogether exquisite in rendering some of the sweet qualities of English girlhood;

and, on the whole, the most easy and graceful composition in the rooms. I had written first, 'masterly' composition; but no composition is quite masterly which modifies or subdues any of the natural facts so as to force certain relations between them. Mr. Leslie at present subdues all greens, refuses all but local darks, and scarcely permits himself, even in flesh, colour enough for life. Young ladies at a happy country boarding-school, like this, would be as bright as by the seaside; and there is no reason why a knowledge-gatherer, well cared for, should be less rosy than a samphire-gatherer.

Rich colour may be in good taste, as well as the poorest; and the quaintness, politeness, and grace of Leslie might yet glow with the strength and freshness of Hook. It may perhaps be more difficult than I suppose to get the delicate lines and gradations on which the expression of these girls mainly depends, in deeper colour. But, at all events, the whole should be more in harmony, and more consistently precious. English girls are, perhaps, not all of them, St. Dorothys; but at least they are good enough to deserve to have their rose-leaves painted about them thoroughly.

The little thing on the extreme left, with the hoop, is as pleasant a shadow of nature as can be conceived in this kind; and I have no words to say how pretty she is.

But Mr. Leslie is in the very crisis of his artist life. His earlier pictures were finer in colour—and colour is the soul of painting. If he could

resolve to paint thoroughly, and give the colours of Nature as they are, he might be a really great painter, and almost hold, to Bonifazio, the position that Reynolds held to Titian. But if he subdues his colour for the sake of black ribands, white dresses, or faintly idealized faces, he will become merely an Academic leaf of the 'Magazin des Modes.'

For the present, however, this picture, and the clay portrait of Carlyle, are, as far as my review reaches, the only two works of essential value in the Exhibition of this year,—that is to say, the only works of quietly capable art, representing what deserved representation.

English girls, by an English painter. Whether you call them Madonnas, or saints—or what not,—it is the law of art-life; your own people, as they live, are the only ones you can understand. Only living Venice, done by Venetian,—living Greece by Greek—living Scotland, perhaps, which has much loved Germany, by living Germany which has much revered Scotland: such expansion of law may be granted; nay, the strangeness of a foreign country, making an artist's sight of it shrewd and selective, may produce a sweet secondary form of beautiful art; your Spanish Lewis—your French Prout—your Italian Wilson—and their like,—second-rate nevertheless, always. Not Lewis, but only Velasquez, can paint a perfect Spaniard; not Wilson, nor Turner, but only Carpaccio, can paint an Italian landscape; and, too fatally, the effort is destructive to

the painters, beyond all resistance; and Lewis loses his animal power among the arabesques of Cairo; Turner, his Yorkshire honesty at Rome; and Holman Hunt—painting the Light of the World in an English orchard—paints the gaslight of Bond Street in the Holy Land.

English maids, I repeat, by an English painter:—that is all that an English Academy can produce of loveliest. There's another beautiful little one, by Mr. Leighton, with a purple drapery thrown over her, that she may be called Fatima, (215, and 345), who would have been quite infinitely daintier in a print frock, and called Patty. And I fear there are no more, to speak of, by artists,* this year; the two vivid sketches, 222, 262, being virtually put out of court by their coarse work. (Look close at the painting of the neck, in the one, and of the left hand, in the other.) Of English men, there is the Mayor, and the Chemist; a vigorous squire or two, and the group of grand old soldiers at Chelsea—a most notable, true, pathetic study; but scarcely artistic enough to be reckoned as of much more value than a good illustrative woodcut. Mr. Watts' portraits are all conscientious and subtle, and of great present interest, yet not realistic enough to last. Exclusively I return to my Carlyle and the schoolgirls, as, the one, sure to abide against the beating of the time stream; and the other, possibly floating on it, discernible as a flower in foam.

* But see note on 317, p. 81.

NATURAL HISTORY.

THERE ought to be a separate room in our Academy for the exhibition of the magnificent work in scientific drawing and engraving, done, at present, almost without public notice, for the illustrations of great European works on Palæontology, Zoology, and Botany. The feeling, on the part of our artists, that an idle landscape sketch, or a clever caricature, may be admitted into their rooms as "artistic"; and that work which the entire energy of early life must be given to learn, and of late life to execute—is to be excluded, merely because it is thoroughly true and useful,—is I hope likely to yield, some day, to the scientific enthusiasm which has prevailed often where it should have been resisted, and may surely therefore conquer, in time, where it has honourable claims.

There is nothing of the kind, however, to be seen here, hitherto: but I may direct attention under this head, rather than that of landscape, to the exquisite skill of delineation with which Mr. Cooke has finished the group of palm trees in his wonderful study of *Sunset at Denderah*. (443.) The sacrifice of colour in shadow for the sake of brilliancy in light, essentially a principle of Holland as opposed to Venice, is in great degree redeemed in this picture by the extreme care with which the relations of light are observed on the terms conceded: but surely, from so low

sunset, the eastern slopes of the mountains on the left could not have been reached by so many rays?

To this division of our subject also must be referred Mr. Brett's "Spires and Steeples of the Channel Islands" (497), but with less praise, for since the days when I first endeavoured to direct the attention of a careless public to his conscientious painting of the Stonebreaker and Woodcutter, he has gained nothing—rather, I fear, lost, in subtlety of execution, and necessitates the decline of his future power by persistently covering too large canvas. There is no occasion that a geological study should also be a geological map; and even his earlier picture, which I am honoured in possessing, of the Val d'Aosta, would have been more precious to me if it had been only of half the Val d'Aosta.

The extreme distance here, however, beyond the promontory, is without any question the best bit of sea and atmosphere in the rooms. The paint on the water surface in the bay is too loaded; but laid with extreme science in alternations of colour.

At a still lower level, though deserving some position in the Natural History class for its essential, though rude, and apparently motiveless, veracity, must be placed "The Fringe of the Moor." (74.)

But why one should paint the fringe of the moor, rather than the breadth of it, merely for the privilege of carrying an ugly wooden fence

all across the foreground, I must leave modern sentimentalists and naturalists to explain. Vestiges of the painter's former power of seeing true colour remain in the iridescent distance, but now only disgrace the gentle hillsides with their coarseness of harlequinade; and the daubed sky—daubed without patience even to give unity of direction to the bristle marks—seems to have been wrought in obtrusive directness of insult to every master, principle and feeling, revered, or experienced, in the schools of noble art, from its nativity to this hour.

And, closing the equivocal group of works in which Naturalism prevails unjustly over art, I am obliged to rank Mr. Leighton's interesting study of man in his Oriental function of scarecrow, (symmetrically antithetic to his British one of game-preserve) 398. It is, I do not doubt, anatomically correct; and, with the addition of the corn, the poppies, and the moon, becomes semi-artistic; so that I feel much compunction in depressing it into the Natural History class; and the more, because it partly forfeits its claim even to such position, by obscuring in twilight its really valuable delineation of the body, and disturbing our minds, in the process of scientific investigation, by sensational effects of after-glow, and lunar effulgence, which are disadvantageous, not to the scientific observer only, but to less learned spectators: for when simple and superstitious persons like myself, greatly susceptible to the influence of low stage lamps

and pink side-lights, first catch sight of the striding figure from the other side of the room, and take it, perhaps, for the angel with his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the earth, swearing there shall be Time no longer; or for Achilles alighting from one of his lance-cast-long leaps on the shore of Scamander; and find, on near approach, that all this grand straddling, and turning down of the gas, mean, practically, only a lad shying stones at sparrows, we are but too likely to pass on petulantly, without taking note of what is really interesting in this Eastern custom and skill;—skill which I would recommend with all my heart to the imitation of the British game preserver aforesaid, when the glorious end of Preservation is to be accomplished in Battue. Good slinging would involve more healthy and graceful muscular action than even the finest shooting; and might, if we fully followed the Eastern example, be most usefully practised in other periods of the year, and districts of England, than those now consecrated to the sports of our aristocracy. I cannot imagine a more edifying spectacle than a British landlord in the middle of his farmer's cornfield, occupied in this entirely patriotic method of Protection.

The remainder of the pictures which I have to notice as belonging to the domain of Natural History, are of indubitable, though unpretending, merit: they represent indeed pure Zoology in its highest function of Animal Biography, which scientific persons will one day find requires much

more learned investigation of its laws than the Thanatography which is at present their exclusive occupation and entertainment.

414. A Fascinating Tail. (H. H. Couldery.)

Quite the most skilful piece of minute and Dureresque painting in the exhibition—(it cannot be rightly seen without a lens);—and in its sympathy with kitten nature, down to the most appalling depths thereof, and its tact and sensitiveness to the finest gradations of kittenly meditation and motion,—unsurpassable. It seems hard to require of a painter who has toiled so much, that, for this very reason, he should toil the more. But “The Little Epicure” (169) cannot be considered a picture till the cabbage leaves are as perfect as the fish.

1234. The First Taste. (S. Carter.)

Altogether enjoyable to me; and I am prepared to maintain (as a true lover of dogs, young and old), against all my heroic and tragically-minded friends, that this picture is exemplary in its choice of a moment of supreme puppy felicity as properest time for puppy portraiture. And I thankfully—and with some shame for my generally too great distrust of modern sentiment—acknowledge, before it, that there is a real element of fine benevolence towards animals, in us, advanced quite infinitely, and into another world of feeling, from the days of Snyders and Rubens. “The Little Wanderers”

(1173), by this same painter, are a most pathetic and touching group of children in the wood. You may see, if you will take your opera-glass to it, that the robin is even promising to cover them with leaves, if indeed things are to end, as seems too probable. And compare, by the way, the still more meek and tender human destitution, "To be Left till Called for," 83, which I am ashamed of myself for forgetting, as one of the pretty things that first encouraged me to write these notes. "Nobody's Dog" may console us with his more cynical view of his position in the wide world; and finally, Miss Acland's Platonic puppy, (737) shows us how events of the most unexpected, and even astounding, character, may be regarded, by a dog of sense, with entire moral tranquillity, and consequently with undisturbed powers of reflection and penetration.

How strange that I cannot add to my too short list of animal studies—any, however unimportant, of Birds! (I do not count as deserving notice at all, dramatic effects of vulture, raven, etc.) Not a nest—not a plume! English society now caring only for kingfishers' skins on its hat, and plovers' eggs on its plate.

LANDSCAPE.

THE distinction between Natural Historic painting of scenery and true Landscape, is that the one represents objects as a Government Surveyor does, for the sake of a good account of the things themselves, without emotion, or definite purpose of expression. Landscape painting shows the relation between nature and man; and, in fine work, a particular tone of thought in the painter's mind respecting what he represents.

I endeavoured, thirty years ago, in 'Modern Painters,' to explain this difference briefly, by saying that, in Natural History painting, the artist was only the spectator's horse; but, in Landscape painting, his friend.

The worst of such friendliness, however, is that a conceited painter may at last leave Nature out of the question altogether, and talk of himself only; and then there is nothing for it but to go back to the Government Surveyor. Mr. Brett, in his coast scene above noticed, gives us things, without thoughts; and the fuliginous moralists above noticed, thoughts — such as they are — without things: by all means let us rather have the geographical synopsis.

415. Hoppers on the Road. (W. Linnell.)

This is a landscape, however; and, if it were more lightly painted, we might be very happy

with it. Mr. Linnell cares no more than his father for brush-dexterity; but he does no worse now, in that part of the business, than every one else. And what a relief it is, for any wholesome human sight, after sickening itself among the blank horrors of dirt, ditch-water, and malaria, which the imitators of the French schools have begrimed our various exhibition walls with, to find once more a bit of blue in the sky, and a glow of brown in the coppice, and to see that Hoppers in Kent can enjoy their scarlet and purple—like empresses and emperors!

1199. Summer Days for Me. (A. W. Hunt.)

I am at some pause in expressing my pleasure in the realization of this beautiful scene, because I have personal interest in it, my own favourite summer walk being through this very field. As, however, I was far away at Assisi when the artist painted it, and had nothing whatever to do with either the choice or treatment of his subject, it is not indecorous for me to praise a work in which I am able so securely to attest a fidelity of portraiture, happily persisted in without losing the grace of imagination.

It is the only picture of the year which I saw in the studio; and that by chance; for it is one of my fixed laws not to look at pictures before they take their fair trial in the Academy. But I ventured to find fault with the sky. The sky was courteously changed to please me; but I am encroaching enough to want it changed more.

"Summer days are" *not* "for me" unless the sky is blue in them, and especially unless it looks—what simple mortals too often make it in reality,—a great way off. I want this sky to look bluer at the top, and farther away at the bottom. The brook on the right is one of the very few pieces of stream which, this year, have been studied for their beauty, not their rage.

256. Wise Saws. (J. C. Hook, R.A.)

I suspect that many, even of the painter's admirers, pass this pretty sketch without noticing the humour with which he has expressed the gradations of feminine curiosity, scientific attention, and conscientious sense of responsibility, in the faces of the troop of cows who approach to investigate the nature of the noisy phenomenon upon the palings. It is a charming summer sketch, but scarcely worth sending to the Academy; and time was wasted by the good painter in carrying so far, what he felt his skill would be misapplied in carrying farther.

I am sure that Mr. Hook cannot lately have been reading his Richard II.: but, whether the line quoted for his motto chanced idly to occur to his memory, or was suggested to him by some acquaintance, he will, I trust, find a more decorous, as he easily may a more amusing, motto for his pretty cattle piece, before it becomes known in the picture market as the parody of one of the most pathetic utterances in all Shakespearian tragedy.

123. On the River Mole. (Birket Foster.)

In doubt whether the spectator, without assistance, would see all the metaphysical distinctions between the cows in Mr. Hook's landscape, I need a more keen-sighted spectator's assistance to tell me, in Mr. Foster's, whether those animals on the opposite bank of the Mole are cows at all. If so, the trunks of the trees in the hedge beyond are about twenty yards in girth. What do our good water-colour painters mean by wasting their time in things like this, (and I could name one or two who have done worse,) for the sake of getting their names into the Academy catalogue?

69, 81. The Horse-dealer. Crossing the Moor.

I have not looked long enough at these to justify me in saying more of them than that they should not be here on the line. That much I *must* say; and emphatically.

265. (I venture to supply a title, the painter seeming to have been at a loss.) A Wild Rose, remarkable in being left on its stalk, demonstrates to the poet Campbell that there has been a garden in this locality.

Little thought I, when I wrote the first line of 'Modern Painters,' that a day would come when I should have to say of a modern picture what I must say of this. When I began my book, Wilkie was yet living; and though spoiled by his Spanish ambition, the master's hand was yet unpalsied, nor

had lost its skill of practice in its pride. Turner was in his main colour-strength, and the dark room of the Academy had, every year, its four or five painted windows, bright as the jewel casements of Aladdin's palace, and soft as a kingfisher's wings. Mulready was at the crowning summit of his laborious skill; and the "Burchell and Sophia in the Hayfield," and the "Choosing of the Wedding Dress," remain in my mind as standards of English effort in rivalry with the best masters of Holland. Constable's clumsy hand was honest, and his flickering sunshine fair. Stanfield, sea-bred, knew what a ship was, and loved it; knew what rocks and waves were, and wrought out their strength and sway with steadiest will. David Roberts, though utterly destitute of imagination, and incapable of colour, was at least a practised draughtsman in his own field of architectural decoration; loved his Burgos or Seville cathedral fronts as a woman loves lace; and drew the details of Egyptian hieroglyph with dutiful patience, not to show his own skill, but to keep witness of the antiquity he had the wisdom to reverence; while, not a hundred yards from the Academy portico, in the room of the old water-colour, Lewis was doing work which surpassed, in execution, everything extant since Carpaccio; and Copley-Fielding, Robson, Cox, and Prout were every one of them, according to their strength, doing true things with loving minds.

The like of these last-named men, in simplicity and tenderness of natural feeling, expressing itself

with disciplined (though often narrow) skill, does not, so far as I can see, now exist in the ranks of art-labourers; and even of men doing their absolute best according to their knowledge, it would be difficult to find many among the most renowned exhibitors of London and Paris;—while here, full on the line, with highest Academic name, and hailed by explosive applause from the whole nation, here is—I cannot use strength of words enough to tell you what it is, unless you will first ascertain for yourselves what it is *not*.

Get what good you can of it, or anything else in the rooms to-day; but to-morrow, or when next you mean to come to the Academy, go first for half an hour into the National Gallery, and look closely and thoroughly at the painting of the soldier's helmet, and crimson plume in John Bellini's Peter Martyr; at the horse-bridle in the large, nameless Venetian picture of the Madonna and kneeling Knight; at the herbage in the foreground of Mantegna's Madonna; and at Titian's columbines and vine in the Bacchus and Ariadne. All these are examples of true painter's work in minor detail; unsurpassable, but not, by patience and modesty, inimitable. There was once a day when the painter of this (*soi-disant*) landscape promised to do work as good. If, coming straight from that to this, you like this best, be properly thankful for the blessings of modern science and art, and for all the good guidance of Kensington and Messrs. Agnew. But if you think that the

four-petalled rose, the sprinkle of hips looking like ill-drawn heather, the sundial looking like an ill-drawn fountain, the dirty birch-tree, and the rest—whatever it is meant for—of the inarticulate brown scrabble, are not likely to efface in the eyes of future generations the fame of Venice and Etruria, you have always the heroic consolation given you in the exclamation of the ‘Spectator’—“If we must choose between a Titian and a Lancashire cotton mill—give us the cotton mill.”

Literally, here you have your cotton mill employed in its own special Art-produce. Here you have, what was once the bone and sinew of a great painter, ground and carded down into black-podded broom-twigs. That is what has come to pass upon him; that, *his* finding on his ‘ruinous walk’ over the diabolic Tom Tidler’s ground of Manchester and Salford. Threshed under the mammon flail into threads and dust, and shoddy-fodder for fools; making manifest yet, with what ragged remnant of painter’s life is in him, the results of mechanical English labour on English land. Not here the garden of the sluggard, green with frank weeds; not here the garden of the Deserted Village, overgrown with ungathered balm; not here the noble secrecy of a virgin country, where the falcon floats and the wild goat plays;—but here the withering pleasance of a fallen race, who have sold their hearths for money, and their glory for a morsel of bread.

231. The Quarries of Holmeground. (J. S. Raven.)

The painter has real feeling of the sublimity of hill forms, and has made the most of his Langdale pikes. But it is very wonderful that in all this Academy, so far as I have yet seen, there is not a single patient study of a mossy rock. Now the beauty of foreground stone is to be mossy, as the beauty of a beast is to be furry; and a quarried rock is to a natural one what a skinned leopard is to a live one. Even if, as a simple painter, and no huntsman, one liked one's leopard or tiger better dead than alive, at least let us have him dead in his integrity; or—if so much as that cannot be,—for pictorial purpose it is better to have, as in No. 697, the skin without the tiger, than, as here, the tiger without the skin. (No. 697, by the way, should have been named in the Natural History class, for a good study as far as it reaches, and there may be more substantial drawing in it than I can see at the height where it is hung.)

Another sorrowful character in the mountain-painting of this year, is the almost total absence of any attempt to render calm and full sunshine. 564 and 368 are, I think, the only exceptions, though scarcely worth noticing except as such; unless the latter, for the extreme and singular beauty of the natural scene it represents. The "Mountain Twilight," 759, W. C. Eddington, is evidently a pure and careful study of evening air among noble hills. What an incomparably ridiculous mob this

London mob is!—to let some square leagues of room lie about its metropolis in waste brickfield, and occupy immeasurable space of wall with advertisements of pills and pictures of newly-opened shops; and lift a lovely little drawing like this simply—out of its way.

237. Richmond Hill. (Vicat Cole, A.)

The passages on the left, under the trees, of distant and subdued light, in their well-studied perfection, are about the most masterly things in landscape work in this exhibition; but has the painter never in his life seen the view from Richmond Hill on a clear day? Such a thing is still possible; and when it happens, is the time to paint that distance, or at least, (for the passages on the left imply mist), when the indistinctness of it may be in golden mist, not gas fume. The last line quoted from Thomson seems to have been written prophetically, to describe the England of our own day. But Thomson was never thinking of real smoke when he wrote it. He was as far from imagining that English landscape would ever be stifled in floating filth, as that the seasons should stop rolling, or April not know itself from November. He means merely the warm mist of an extreme horizon; and has at least given us something to look at before we come to it. What has Mr. Vicat Cole done with all those hills, and dales, and woods, and lawns, and spires, which he leads us to expect?

I think I never saw a large picture so much

injured by a little fault, as this is by the white wake of the farthest boat on the river. As a fact, it is impossible;—as a white line, it cuts all to pieces.

651. The Head of a Highland Glen. (F. C. Newcome.)

The best study of torrent, including distant and near water, that I find in the rooms: 1075 has been most carefully and admirably studied from nature by Mr. Raven: only what is the use of trying to draw water with charcoal? and what makes nearly all the painters this year choose to paint their streams in a rage, and foul with flood, instead of in their beauty, and constant beneficence? Our manufacturers have still left, in some parts of England and Scotland, streams of what may be advertised in the bills of Natural Scenery as 'real water'; and I myself know several so free from pollution that one can sit near them with perfect safety, even when they are not in flood.

The rest of this mountain scene by Mr. Newcome is also carefully studied, and very right and good.

756. The Llugwy at Capel Curig. (I. J. Curnock.)

I find this to be the most attentive and refined landscape of all here;—too subdued in its tone for my own pleasure, but skilful and affectionate in

a high degree; and one of the few exceptions to my general statement above made; for here is a calm stream patiently studied. The distant woods and hills are all very tender and beautiful.

636 is also a singularly careful and unassumingly true drawing;—but are the town and rail not disquieted enough,—that we should get no rest in a village?

POLICY.

WE finally inquire what our British artists have to say to us on the subject of good Government, and its necessary results;—what triumph they express in the British Constitution and its present achievements.

In old times, all great artistic nations were pictorially talkative, chiefly, next to religion, on the subject of Government. Venice, Florence, and Siena did little else than expound, in figures and mythic types, the nature of civic dignity, statesmanly duty, and senatorial or soldierly honour; and record, year by year, the events conducive to their fame.

I have not exhaustively overlooked the Academy; but, except Miss Thompson's study of a battle fought just "sixty years since,"—I find no English record of any important military or naval achievement; and the only exhibition of the mode in

which Britannia at present rules the waves, is Mr. Cooke's "Devastation" being reviewed;—somewhat sable and lugubrious as a national spectacle, dubious as a national triumph, and to myself, neither in colour nor sentiment enjoyable, as the pictures of Victorys and Temeraires one used to see in days of simpler warfare. And of political achievement there seems still less consciousness or regard in the British artist; so that future generations will ask in vain for any aid to their imagination of the introduction of Dr. Kenealy to the Speaker, or any other recent triumph of the British Constitution.

The verdict of existing British Art on existing British Policy is, therefore, if I understand it rightly, that we have none;—but, in the battle of life, have arrived at declaration of an universal *Sauve qui peut*;—or explicitly, to all men, Do as you like, and get what you can. Something other than this may however be gathered, it seems to me, from the two records given us of the war,—so unwise, and yet so loyal,—of sixty years ago.

613. *La Charge des Cuirassiers Français à Waterloo.* (Philippoteau.)

This carefully studied and most skilful battle piece is but too likely to be overlooked in the confused rush to Miss Thompson's more attractive composition. And of all in the Academy, this is the picture which an Englishman, of right feeling, would least wish to overlook. I remember

no so impartial and faithful representation of an historical battle. I know no war-painting by the artists of any great race, however modest, in which the object has not hitherto been definitely—self-laudation. But here is a piece of true war-history, of which it is not possible to say, by observance of any traceable bias, whether a Frenchman or Englishman painted it. Such a picture is more honourable to France than the taking of the Malakoff.

I never approached a picture with more iniquitous prejudice against it, than I did Miss Thompson's; partly because I have always said that no woman could paint; and secondly because I thought what the public made such a fuss about, *must* be good for nothing.

But it is Amazon's work, this; no doubt of it, and the first fine pre-Raphaelite * picture of battle we have had;—profoundly interesting; and showing all manner of illustrative and realistic faculty. Of course, all that need be said of it, on this side, must have been said twenty times over in the journals; and it remains only for me to make my tardy genuflexion, on the trampled corn, before this Pallas of Pall Mall;—and to murmur my poor words of warning to her, that

* Miss Thompson may perhaps not in the least know herself for a sister of the school. But the entire power of her picture, as of her own mind, depends first on her resolution to paint things as they really are, or were; and not as they might be poetically fancied to be. See above, the note on 218, p. 10.

she remember, in her day of triumph, how it came to pass that Atalanta was stayed, and Camilla slain.

Camilla-like the work is—chiefly in its refinement, a quality I had not in the least expected, for the cleverest women almost always show their weakness in endeavours to be dashing. But actually, here, what I suppose few people would think of looking at, the sky, is the most tenderly painted, and with the truest outlines of cloud, of all in the exhibition;—and the terrific piece of gallant wrath and ruin on the extreme right, where the cuirassier is catching round the neck of his horse as he falls, and the convulsed fallen horse just seen through the smoke below—is wrought, through all the truth of its frantic passion, with gradations of colour and shade which I have not seen the like of since Turner's death.

I place these two paintings under the head of 'Policy,' because it seems to me that, especially before the Quatrebras, one might wisely consider with Mr. Carlyle, and with oneself, what was the 'net upshot' and meaning of our modern form of the industry of war. Why should these wild and well meaning young Irish lads have been brought, at great expense, all the way to Four Arms, merely to knock equally wild and well meaning young French lads out of their saddles into their graves; and take delight in doing so? and why should the English and French squires at the head of their regiments, have, practically, no other object in life than

living these poor boys, and an infinite mob
 les of such others, to their destruction?
 hink of it. Suppose this picture, as well as the
 I was so happy in praising of Mr. Collinson's,
 been called—as it, also, quite properly
 ght have been—"Sunday Afternoon," (only
 ing June 18th, 1815.") Suppose the two had
 n hung side by side. And, to complete our
 aterials for meditation, suppose Mr. Nicol's
 The Sabbath Day" (1159)—which I observed
 e 'Daily Telegraph' called an exquisitely comic
 cture, but which I imagine Mr. Nicol meant
 r a serious one,—representing the conscientious
 cottish mountain-matron setting out for the place
 here she may receive her cake of spiritual
 atmeal, baken on the coals of Presbyterian zeal;
 —suppose, I say, this ideal of Scottish Sabbath
 occupation placed beside M. Philippoteau's
 admirable painting of the Highland regiment
 at evening missionary service, in that sweet
 and fruitful foreign land; while Miss Thompson
 enables us also, thus meditating in our fields at
 eventide, to consider, if not the Lilies, at least
 the Poppies of them; and to understand how in
this manner of friction of ears of corn—by his
 bent knees instead of his fingers—the modern
 Christian shows that the Sabbath was made for
 man, and not man for the Sabbath?

'Well—and if this were so done,—should we
 not feel that the peace of the cottage, and the
 honour of the mountain-side, were guarded and
 won for them by that mighty Evening Service,

with the thunder of its funeral march rolled deep among the purple clouds?’

No! my soldier friends; no: do not think it. They were, and are, guarded and won by silent virtues of the hearth and the rock, which must endure until the time when the prayer we pray in our every Sabbath Litany, to be delivered from battle, murder, and sudden death,—shall have been offered with sincere hearts, fervently; and so found its way at last to the audience of Heaven.

THE END.

NOTE TO PICTURE 518.

“The rarity and grandeur of his character being that he was a Greek in ideas and a Roman in action; who really did, and abstained, strictly to ideal, in a time when everybody else was sadly fallen from his ideal.

“In 353 he is made Cæsar (Constantius having no sons, and he being last of his race); and from that to Constantius' death in 361 he has to fight the Franks and Alemanni. During the last few years of this time I find he lived mostly at Paris—that he fortified the ancient Lutetia (l'Ile de la Cité), built the Thermæ Juliani, the remains of which (Thermes de Julien) are still visible in the Rue de la Harpe, between Palais de Clugny and École de Médecine. Also, in a scarcity of corn from inroads of the Germans, he got a great supply of corn from England (calculated at 120,000 quarters *at once*)—and fed people all along the Rhine from Bingen to Cologne. He says (Epist. ii.) he was a Christian up to his twentieth year, 351: and he said nothing about his change (in public) till 361. Then he felt himself the successor of M. Aurelius, and seems to have gone to work in his determined, clear-sighted way. But the Pagans seem to have been surprised at his faith as much as the Christians at his apostacy.”—REV. R. ST. J. TYRWHITT.



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